

Chapter 7

Creating Sacred Space

The Vessel for Vibration

In the study of acoustics, a sound's resonance depends on its source and the space in which it is produced. A violin string vibrates differently in a concert hall than in an open field. The same principle applies to sacred sound—the vibration of OM or HU resonates differently depending on the container that holds it.

This container exists on multiple levels:

- **The physical space** where practice occurs
- **The body** is the immediate vessel for sound
- **The heart/mind** as the field of awareness
- **Time** as the temporal container for practice

Creating sacred space means attending to all these dimensions—establishing conditions that support the deepest resonance of sacred sound, both externally and internally.

The Call of Silence

Throughout history, spiritual seekers have withdrawn to cultivate silence and stillness. This is not because the Divine is absent in the world but because the noise of ordinary life often drowns out the subtler vibrations of sacred presence.

Jesus regularly withdrew to “lonely places” to pray (Luke 5:16). Buddha found enlightenment in solitude under the Bodhi tree. The Desert Fathers and Mothers of early Christianity retreated to the Egyptian desert. Sufi mystics practiced *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion). Hindu yogis sought caves and forests for deep meditation.

This universal impulse toward solitude is not about escaping the world but creating conditions where deeper dimensions of reality can be perceived. As the Psalmist writes: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)—suggesting that stillness is a prerequisite for certain kinds of knowing.

In our modern world, with its constant stimulation and distraction, creating a space for silence becomes even more essential. This does not necessarily mean physical isolation, although periods of retreat can be valuable, but establishing a boundary around a specific time and place dedicated to practice.

Creating an External Vessel

While sacred sound can be practiced anywhere, a dedicated physical space supports its depth and continuity. This need not be elaborate; even a corner of a room can become a sanctuary when treated with intention and care.

Some principles for creating physical sacred space:

- **Cleanliness and order:** A clean, uncluttered space creates mental clarity and shows respect for the practice.
- **Sensory support:** Simple elements that engage the senses—perhaps a candle, a meaningful image, or a natural object—can help anchor awareness in the present moment.
- **Consistency:** Regularly using the same space builds an energetic container that deepens over time. The space begins to carry the vibration of practice.
- **Boundaries:** Clear boundaries, whether physical (a screen or curtain) or temporal (specific times for practice), help separate sacred space from ordinary activities.
- **Orientation:** Many traditions suggest facing east (toward the rising sun) or north (toward the North Star) to align with natural energetic patterns, although this is less important than maintaining consistency.

The key is not perfection but intention—creating a space that supports rather than hinders practice, invites rather than demands, and contains without constraining. Physical space is not the goal but a means to create conditions for inner spaciousness.

The Temple of Sound

Before sound there is breath. Before breath, there is body. The physical vessel through which sacred sound moves is not incidental but integral to the practice. The body is the primary instrument, the resonance chamber through which vibration transforms.

Preparing the body for sacred sound practice involves:

- **Posture:** A balanced, aligned posture allows breath and sound to flow freely while maintaining alertness. The spine is ideally straight but not rigid, creating a clear channel for energy.
- **Relaxation:** Unnecessary tension, particularly in the jaw, throat, and shoulders, constrains the free movement of vibration. Gentle stretching or body scanning before practice helps release this tension.
- **Breath awareness:** The breath is the bridge between body and sound, between conscious and unconscious dimensions. Taking time to settle into a natural breathing rhythm creates a foundation for practice.

- **Energy awareness:** Many traditions recognize energy centers in the body—chakras in yogic tradition, Latifa in Sufism, and energy gates in Taoist practice. Gently bringing awareness to these centers prepares them to resonate with sacred sound.

The body is not an obstacle to spiritual practice but its very vehicle, not something to transcend but to transform through vibration. When the body is appropriately prepared, it becomes not just a producer of sound but a receiver capable of detecting subtle vibrations that the ordinary senses miss.

Preparing the Mind

The most elaborate physical space and perfect bodily posture cannot compensate for a mind filled with distractions. The inner dimension of sacred space involves preparing the field of awareness, creating mental and emotional conditions conducive to deep practice.

Some approaches to creating inner sacred space:

- **Setting intention:** Beginning practice with a clear intention focuses the mind and heart on the practice's purpose.
- **Releasing expectations:** While intention is essential, attachment to specific outcomes can obstruct genuine experience. The mind must be open to what arises, not grasping for particular states.
- **Transitional practices:** Simple rituals like washing hands, lighting a candle, taking three conscious breaths, and the OM salutation can serve as a threshold between ordinary and sacred consciousness.
- **Dealing with distractions:** Rather than fighting mental distractions, many traditions teach bringing gentle awareness to them while returning to the practice. Over time, the mind naturally settles.
- **Cultivating receptivity:** Sacred sound practice is not just about producing vibration but receiving it, allowing oneself to be resonated rather than being the resonator.

This inner preparation is not separate from the practice but its foundation. The quality of attention brought to sacred sound determines its transformative potential more than any external factor.

The Rhythms of Practice

Sacred space exists not just in physical location but in time. The when of practice can be as important as the where, particularly in establishing continuity and depth. Different traditions offer various approaches to sacred timing:

- **Daily practice:** Consistent daily practice creates a rhythm that carries the vibration through everyday life, even if it is brief.
- **Traditional auspicious times:** Many traditions recognize dawn (brahma muhurta in yogic tradition) and dusk as incredibly potent times for practice when the veil between worlds is thinner.

- **Moon cycles:** Some traditions align practices with lunar phases—the full moon is associated with expansion, and the new moon is associated with internalization.
- **Seasonal observances:** Solstices, equinoxes, and other seasonal transitions offer natural times for deeper practice.
- **Retreats:** Periodic, intensive practice, whether formal retreats or self-guided periods of deeper engagement, allows for exploring dimensions that daily practice might not reach.

The key is finding a sustainable rhythm for your life circumstances that honors the natural cycles of the body, nature, and the cosmos. Sacred time is not about rigid schedules but aligning personal practice with universal patterns.

Creating Sacred Space in Challenging Circumstances

Not everyone has access to ideal conditions for practice. Limited physical space, busy schedules, family responsibilities, and health challenges can make traditional approaches to sacred space seem unattainable. Yet the essence of sacred space lies not in external perfection but in intention and attention.

Some approaches for challenging circumstances:

- **Micro-practices:** Even a few minutes of conscious breathing or silent mantra repetition can establish sacred space amid activity.
- **Mobile sacred space:** A small object carried in a pocket, a phrase held in the heart, or a particular quality of attention can create a portable sacred space that moves with you.
- **Finding sanctuary in the ordinary:** When approached with awareness, daily activities like washing dishes, walking, or waiting in line can become vessels for practice.
- **The body as primary temple:** When external conditions are limited, the body, through posture, breath, and internal focus, becomes the primary sacred space.
- **Community as container:** When individual practice space is limited, gathering with others—physically or virtually—can create a shared field that supports practice.

The core principle remains: sacred space is ultimately a quality of consciousness, not a set of external conditions. While supportive environments help, the true temple is built from attention, intention, and the willingness to be present with what is.

Container and Content

A dynamic relationship exists between the container (sacred space) and the content (vibration) in the alchemy of sacred sound. The container makes the vibration possible while the vibration transforms the container. Over time, the distinction between them begins to dissolve.

This relationship mirrors the paradox at the heart of spiritual practice: structure creates freedom. The disciplines of creating sacred space—physical, bodily, mental, temporal—are not constraints but

channels that allow the free flow of energy and awareness. The river needs banks to flow; vibration needs boundaries to resonate.

Yet the ultimate purpose of creating sacred space is to discover the limitless space that already exists within and beyond all boundaries, the vast field of awareness that contains all experience without being contained by it. The vessel exists to be filled, ultimately, to disappear into that which fills it.

The Space That Holds You

As we conclude this exploration of sacred space, consider:

- What if sacred space is not something you create but something you recognize—a dimension of reality that is always present but often overlooked?
- What if the true purpose of external sacred space is to remind you of the sacred space that you are—the awareness that holds all experience?
- What if the ultimate sacred space is not a place but a presence that permeates all places?

Let these questions guide your approach to creating conditions for practice. Remember that the container exists for the sake of the formless reality it contains—the vibration that resonates through all things, including you.

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